

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

JAMES SANDERS, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

EDGE HOLDINGS, *et al.*,

Defendants.

CASE NO. 11cv1590 LAB (MDD)

ORDER GRANTING  
DEFENDANTS' MOTION TO  
COMPEL PLAINTIFF JAMIA  
SANDERS TO SUBMIT TO AN  
INDEPENDENT MENTAL  
EXAMINATION

[DOC. NO. 34]

Before the Court is Defendants' motion to compel Plaintiff Jamia Sanders to submit to an independent mental examination pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P. 35. (Doc. No. 34). The motion was filed on May 31, 2012. Plaintiff responded in opposition on June 1, 2012. (Doc. No. 36). At the outset, Plaintiff asserts that Defendants filed their motion in violation of this Court's chambers rules regarding discovery disputes. (*Id.* at 2-3). Specifically, Plaintiff claims that the motion was filed without the required meet and confer session and that Plaintiff was given an insufficient period of time to participate in this Court's required joint motion for determination of discovery disputes. *See* Local Rule 26.1 and Chambers Rules of Magistrate Judge Dembin, Section V(a) and (c).

Under normal circumstances, the Court would deny the motion without

1 prejudice and require counsel to meet and confer. But, with the discovery cut-off date  
 2 of June 27 looming in this case, the Court will proceed to the merits. Counsel are  
 3 warned, however, that the sort of gamesmanship lurking behind this motion will not  
 4 be tolerated further.

#### 5 Background

6 Plaintiffs in this case consist of James and Jamia Sanders, their daughter,  
 7 Stephanie Sanders, three minor children of Stephanie Sanders, and Jordan Williams,  
 8 the father of the three minor children. (Doc. No. 1). James and Jamia Sanders reside  
 9 in an apartment complex owned and managed by Defendants. The causes of action  
 10 asserted allege violations of federal and state fair housing laws, state civil rights  
 11 laws, negligence and unfair business practices. (*Id.*) In summary, Defendants are  
 12 alleged to have actively discouraged the minor grandchildren of James and Jamia  
 13 Sanders from visiting them in violation of law. Plaintiffs seek injunctive relief and  
 14 compensatory and punitive damages. For purposes of this motion, one allegation in  
 15 the Complaint deserves special note. Plaintiffs allege:

16 By reason of defendants' unlawful acts and practices, plaintiffs have  
 17 suffered . . . severe emotional distress and physical injury, humiliation  
 18 and mental anguish, fear, stress, including bodily injury such as  
 stomach aches, headaches, sleep loss, feelings of depression,  
 discouragement, anger, and nervousness; and reliving the experience; . .

19 (*Id.* at ¶26)

20 Defendants seek to compel Plaintiff Jamia Sanders to submit to an  
 21 independent mental examination asserting that she has put her mental condition in  
 22 controversy. In support, Defendants refer to §26 of the Complaint, excerpted above,  
 23 and rely on certain answers to Interrogatories wherein Plaintiff Jamia Sanders  
 24 claims to have sought medical treatment for sleeplessness, nightmares, anxiety,  
 25 panic attacks, hyper-vigilance, depression, anger, paranoia and discomfort being  
 26 outside of her home based upon the incidents forming the basis of the Complaint. She  
 27 also stated that she has been placed back on certain medications that she had not  
 28

1 had to take in years. (See Doc. No. 34-2, Exh. C).

2 In response, Plaintiff asserts that she has not brought a cause of action for  
3 intentional infliction of emotional distress. Plaintiff concedes, however, that her  
4 current mental health is “in issue” but challenges the scope of the requested  
5 examination. (Doc. No. 36 at 6). Plaintiff having conceded that her mental condition  
6 is in controversy, the Court will only consider whether good cause has been shown for  
7 the scope of the examination requested by Defendants.

#### 8 Discussion

9 Rule 35(a) provides, in relevant part:

10 When the mental or physical condition ...of a party... is in controversy,  
11 the court in which the action is pending may order the party to submit  
12 to a physical or mental examination by a suitably licensed or certified  
13 examiner .... The order may be made only on motion for good cause  
shown and upon notice to the person to be examined and to all parties  
and shall specify the time, place, manner, conditions, and scope of the  
examination and the person or persons by whom it is to be made.

14 Under FRCP 35, a party is entitled to conduct a mental examination of another  
15 party if the movant demonstrates that: (1) the plaintiff has placed her mental  
16 condition in controversy; and (2) good cause exists for the examination. *See, e.g.,*  
17 *Schlagenhauf v. Holder*, 279 U.S. 104, 116-117 (1964); *Tan v. City and County of San*  
18 *Francisco, et al.*, 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 21639 at \*2-\*3 (N.D.Cal. 2009); *Turner v.*  
19 *Imperial Stores, et al.*, 161 F.R.D. 89, 92 (S.D.Cal. 1995). Although there is a  
20 constitutional right to privacy, that right is “conditional rather than absolute” and “is  
21 waived when a plaintiff raised before the court issues concerning her mental and  
22 emotional condition and seeks damages for mental and emotional injuries.” *Enwere v.*  
23 *Terman Assoc., LP, et al.*, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 101901 at\*5 (N.D.Cal. 2008)(citing  
24 *Caesar v. Mountanos*, 542 F.2d 1064, 1066-70 (9th Cir. 1976). Rule 35 is to be  
25 “construed liberally to allow the examination.” *Tan*, 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 21639 at  
26 \*5.

27 The initial inquiry typically is whether Plaintiff has placed her mental  
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1 condition sufficiently in controversy. A plaintiff puts her mental state in controversy  
2 if one or more of the following aggravating factors are present: (1) a cause of action  
3 for intentional or negligent infliction of emotional distress; (2) an allegation of a  
4 specific mental or psychiatric injury or disorder; (3) a claim of unusually severe  
5 emotional distress; or (5) plaintiff concedes that her mental condition is “in  
6 controversy” within the meaning of Rule 35(a). *See, e.g., Tan*, 2009 U.S.Dist.LEXIS  
7 at \*4; *Turner*, 161 F.R.D. at 98. Although mental state may not be “in  
8 controversy” where only “garden variety” emotional distress damages are claimed,  
9 presence of one of these factors is sufficient to place mental state in controversy. *See*  
10 *Ayat v. Societe Air France, et al.*, 2007 U.S.Dist.LEXIS 31285 (N.D.Cal 2007). As  
11 Plaintiff has conceded that her mental condition is in controversy, the initial inquiry  
12 is satisfied.

13       The second and final inquiry is whether there is good cause to order the  
14 examination. A factor used by the courts to assess “good cause” in this context is  
15 whether a party has alleged some type of ongoing mental injury. *See, e.g., Enwere*,  
16 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 101901 at \*8 (citing *Bridges v. Eastman Kodak Co.*, 850  
17 F.Supp. 216, 221-22 (S.D.N.Y. 1994); *Duncan v. Upjohn*, 155 F.R.D. 23, 25 (D.Conn.  
18 1994); (*Hodges v. Keane*, 145 F.R.D. 332, 334 (S.D.N.Y. 1993)(ordering mental  
19 examination where Plaintiff demonstrated ongoing mental injury by alleging that her  
20 mental health injuries require “continuing medical treatment”); *Ragge v.*  
21 *MCA/Universal Studios*, 165 F.R.D. 605, 608 (C.D.Cal. 1995). If a Plaintiff alleges  
22 ongoing mental injury or the likelihood of future mental distress, there is typically  
23 good cause for a mental examination. *See, e.g., Ayat*, 2007 U.S.Dist.LEXIS 31285 at  
24 \*11 (ordering mental examination when plaintiff stated that he “suffered and  
25 continues to suffer from depression...”).


26       Here, it is not entirely clear whether Plaintiff is alleging continuing emotional  
27 distress. In response to an Interrogatory asking Plaintiff whether her injuries are  
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1 must appear before June 29, 2012, on a date and time to be agreed upon by the  
2 parties, at 3131 Camino del Rio North, Suite 270, San Diego, California, unless  
3 otherwise mutually agreed to by the parties, and submit to a mental examination by  
4 Dr. Mark Kalish. The examination shall take no longer than six (6) hours including  
5 reasonable rest and food breaks. Dr. Kalish is authorized to administer psychological  
6 tests which should be carefully selected to evaluate the nature and scope of the  
7 emotional damage being claimed by Plaintiff. Dr. Kalish may employ widely accepted  
8 written tests, in his discretion, including the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality  
9 Inventory-2 (MMPI-2), the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III (MCMI-III) test  
10 and the Millon Behavioral Medicine Diagnostic (MBMD). Dr. Kalish is authorized to  
11 conduct a clinical interview of Plaintiff designed to provide him with sufficient  
12 information to evaluate Plaintiff's condition and to assist him in interpreting test  
13 results. Dr. Kalish may ask and Plaintiff shall answer questions regarding the events  
14 that are the subject of this action only to the extent necessary for Dr. Kalish properly  
15 to evaluate Plaintiff's mental condition. No persons other than Plaintiff, Dr. Kalish  
16 and necessary staff to assist Dr. Kalish, may attend. The examination may be  
17 recorded. To the extent that forms or questionnaires are required to be completed,  
18 they shall be completed by Plaintiff without assistance. The report of the  
19 examination should be provided to all counsel. Counsel for Defendants may share the  
20 report of the examination with their clients but no copies are to be provided to the  
21 clients. A copy may be provided to experts. The examination report may be used only  
22 in connection with this litigation and for no other purpose.

23 IT IS SO ORDERED:

24 DATED: June 4, 2012

25  
26   
27 Hon. Mitchell D. Dembin  
28 U.S. Magistrate Judge